

DETROIT NEWS
4 December 1979

Orig: SALT
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The Case in Favor of SALT II

As a member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, I have spent the past 11 months studying the military capabilities of our strategic nuclear triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM's), and heavy bombers. I have also spent these many months examining the contents and implications of the proposed Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty.

From the perspective I have gained, I must take issue with The News' Nov. 25 editorial, "SALT II, Phase II."

Your editorial contends that SALT II "would make it impossible for America to have more than 550 ICBM's that are MIRV'd (armed with multiple warheads) by 1985, when the treaty expires. But Russia will have 820." Under SALT II, both nations may deploy up to 820 multiple warhead ICBM's. The United States simply chose years ago to deploy only 550. SALT II has nothing to do with it.

The News makes an important mistake in ignoring its own advice that "The merits of an arms treaty are best analyzed by examining the destructive power allowed each of the parties. SALT II counts the wrong things — strategic launchers rather than warheads." Destructive power is indeed best measured by analyzing the number of warheads each nation deploys — not only on land-based ICBM's, as The News does, but also on submarines and bombers. You also should analyze that accuracy of warheads and yields (up to a certain kilo-

tonnage level) and the number and types of targets to be destroyed.

Currently, the United States has about 9,200 warheads; the Soviet Union has about 5,000, according to the Department of Defense and intelligence community estimates. Under SALT II, both sides are expected to deploy 10,000 to 12,000 warheads by 1985. Then as now, both sides will be allowed enough warheads to destroy the required number of targets, in both limited and all-out attacks.

The forces permitted under SALT II will not, according to defense Secretary Harold Brown and contrary to The News, leave an American President with only "surrender or suicide" options as a result of a Soviet nuclear attack. The United States would have thousands of surviving warheads with which to retaliate against a wide range of Soviet targets. The United States would not have to respond with a "cities" strike which would presumably lead to a suicidal full-scale nuclear war. Before the armed services committee, Mr. Brown, a physicist with wide experience in our nuclear weapons programs, stated: "... There are many, many alternatives that we could take ... we could hit their urban industrial complexes, we could hit their conventional military forces, we could hit their nuclear forces."

Col. Jonathan Alford of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London has written me: "I would not agree that there remain

only 'surrender or suicide' options (regarding a Soviet first strike against American ICBM's). The remaining legs of the 'triad' would retain substantial flexibility in terms of targeting options, which offer alternatives to straightforward counter-value (cities) targeting."

It also should be emphasized that, with or without SALT II, we have these capabilities. The treaty does nothing to either create the threat of a Soviet first strike hypothesized by The News, or reduce our ability to respond.

The News incorrectly refers to the warheads on our ICBM's as old weapons. Since 1972, we have significantly upgraded these warheads. Even before SALT II was signed, we began substituting 900 new warheads on 300 of the 550 ICBM's. These warheads have twice the yield of those replaced. The missiles' accuracy has also been improved.

The News further contends that SALT II cannot be verified, but CIA Director Stansfield Turner and General David C. Jones, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, say it could be.

Finally, I take exception to your statement that "any conscientious senator" should vote against ratification of the treaty. There will be conscientious senators on both sides of the issue. And I believe that most of them will display far more objectivity and balance than your editorial.

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